

Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION NEA-16

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SS-20 SP-03 NSC-07 PM-07 CIAE-00 INR-10

NSAE-00 RSC-01 L-03 EB-11 PRS-01 CIEP-02 DRC-01 /083 W

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P 071115Z JUL 74

FM AMEMBASSY JIDDA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7783

INFO AMCONSUL DHAHRAN

USMTM DHAHRAN PRIORITY

SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY

CINCEUR

S E C R E T JIDDA 3870

E.O.: 11652: GDS

TAGS: ETEL, FAID, MASS, SA

SUBJ: ARMED FORCES SURVEY RECOMMENDATION ON SATELLITE
COMMUNICATIONS

REF : STATE 86617

BEGIN SUMMARY: EMBASSY IS CONVINCED THAT AMONG HIGHEST
PRIORITY DEVELOPMENTAL PROBLEMS FOR SAUDI ARABIA IS THE
SUBJECT OF COMMUNICATIONS, INCLUDING THE CREATION OF A
COUNTRY-WIDE CAPABILITY IN TELEVISION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.
RECENT ARMED FORCES SURVEY BY DOD TEAM REJECTS IDEA OF
DOMESTIC SATELLITE FOR MILITARY USE, A RECOMMENDATION IN
CONFLICT WITH WHAT WE BELIEVE IS NEEDED FOR CIVILIAN
ECONOMY. EMBASSY REQUESTS CAREFUL REVIEW AND COORDINATION
ON THIS QUESTION TO INSURE THAT RECOMMENDATIONS IN MILITARY
FIELD DO NOT CONFLICT WITH THOSE FOR CIVILIAN SECTOR.
END SUMMARY.

1. DISCUSSIONS AT EMBASSY WITH CHUSMTM INDICATE THAT
DEFENSE SURVEY TEAM FOR VARIOUS REASONS HAS DECIDED
NOT RPT NOT TO RECOMMEND DOMESTICE SATELLITE FOR MILITARY
COMMUNICATIONS PURPOSES IN SAUDI ARABIA. ALTHOUGH RE-
JECTION OF IDEA OF SATELLITE COMMUNICATIONS FOR THE MILI-

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TARY NEED NOT NECESSARILY PRECLUDE CIVILIAN DOMESTIC SATEL-

LITE, TAKING EVERYTHING INTO ACCOUNT, IT IS LIKELY TO DO JUST THAT.

2. FROM OUR KNOWLEDGE OF PROGRESS OF "BACKBONE" COAXIAL CABLE PROJECT TO LINK MAJOR CITIES AND THE PREDICTABLE SLOWNESS OF LINKING THROUGH MICROWAVE SYSTEM SOME 500 HUNDRED OTHER OUTLYING SETTLEMENTS, IT IS VERY CLEAR THAT A 11-MEDIA CAPABILITY COULD NOT BE GIVEN TO SAUDI ARABIA BEFORE EARLY 1980'S. CANADIAN EXPERIENCE WITH DOMESTIC SATELLITE IN SIMILAR ISOLATED COMMUNITY SITUATION IS SO GOOD THAT WE WOULD LIKE TO SEE SAG SERIOUSLY CONSIDER A SATELLITE OF ITS OWN WHICH WOULD GIVE THEM COUNTRY-WIDE TELE-COMM CAPABILITY WITHIN 36 MONTHS. DOMESTIC SATELLITE COULD ALSO BE USED FOR MILITARY PRUPOSES AND COULD HAVE ADDED UTILITY FOR CONTROL AND MONITORING OVER SHIPPING IN BOTH RED SEA AND GULF.

3. EMBASSY DESIRES DOD AND NEW U.S. ECONOMIC COMMISSION (WORKING GROUP ON SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY) TO COORDINATE AND REVIEW RECOMMENDATIONS OF DEFENSE SURVEY TEAM ON MILITARY COMMUNICATIONS FOR SAUDI ARABIA. THIS IS ONE AREA WHERE WE WOULD LIKE A FIRST CLASS EFFORT TO TRY AND JUMP SAUDI ARABIA INTO THE 1970'S. WE HAVE PREPARED THE GROUND WITH CENTRAL PLANNING AND THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS, BUT FEEL THAT SUPPORT AND FUNDING OF SAG MINISTRY OF DEFENSE MAY BE NECESSARY TO INSURE THAT SAG GIVES COMMUNICATIONS IMPORVEMENT THE TOP PRIORITY WE BELIEVE IT SHOULD HAVE. FAILURE OF ARMED FORCES SURVEY TO RECOMMEND SATELLITE COMMUNICATIONS, WHILE EMBASSY URGES THIS FOR CIVILIAN SECTOR, PUTS US IN POSITION OF SPEAKING WITH DIVIDED COUNSEL. REQUEST WASHINGTON REVIEW AND UNIFY POSITION ON THIS ISSUE. A NEGATIVE VIEW BY DEFENSE MIGHT KILL AN OTHERWISE GOOD IDEA.

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: AIR DEFENSE, REPORTS, SURVEYS, MILITARY ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS, COMMUNICATION LINES, TELEVISION SYSTEMS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 07 JUL 1974
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: martinml
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1974JIDDA03870
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D740180-0383
From: JIDDA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1974/newtext/t19740770/aaaachyn.tel
Line Count: 95
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: STATE 86617
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: martinml
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 23 AUG 2002
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <23 AUG 2002 by cunninfx>; APPROVED <19 FEB 2003 by martinml>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: ARMED FORCES SURVEY RECOMMENDATION ON SATELLITE COMMUNICATIONS
TAGS: ETEL, EAID, MASS, SA
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005